



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Tuesday, 23 March 2010

VIOLENCE AGAINST POLICE

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (9.52 pm): In the early hours of last Saturday morning two police officers were seriously assaulted in Innisfail by two men and a woman who have subsequently been charged with a variety of offences, including numerous counts of serious assault and grievous bodily harm. One of the police officers was knocked unconscious and suffered a broken jaw and underwent surgery yesterday, while his colleague has suffered swelling and bruising to his head and ribs.

These assaults are totally unacceptable and I offer my support to the two police officers involved and their families on behalf of the local community which I believe is equally shocked and alarmed that yet another act of violence has been directed towards police officers in the district. It saddens me that this has occurred in a community that I represent. I am absolutely appalled by these assaults. I will not sit back and watch this sort of violence occur without addressing the issue. Ordinarily an incident like this would be considered out of character for communities in the Cassowary Coast region. However, along with the assault on a police officer that occurred in November 2009 at Mission Beach, the assaults on these two police officers on the weekend are signs that this is changing.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook, just be careful. If this has to go to court you might use the words 'alleged assault'.

Mr CRIPPS: Certainly, Mr Speaker. Unfortunately, the larger provincial cities in the region—Cairns and Townsville—have a history of violence and are known to be hotspots for violence against police. Police really fulfil a challenging public service role for the benefit and safety of the community. An assault on a police officer in the course of doing their duty is totally unacceptable. It shows a lack of respect for the law in our community.

Police officers do their job in very demanding situations. We ask our police to deal with some of the most violent and dangerous people in our community and enforce the law on our behalf. If the law is to be respected, the people with the responsibility of enforcing the law should also be respected. Failure to do so should have serious consequences. A clear message needs to be sent that this behaviour will not be tolerated.

This morning the minister for police had an opportunity to make a ministerial statement about the issue but he failed to do so even in these extraordinary circumstances where an officer has allegedly been assaulted to the point where they have had their jaw broken and have had to undergo surgery. This issue cannot be ignored by the police minister and the government.

The LNP opposition previously introduced a private member's bill into the Queensland parliament to provide for mandatory sentences of at least three months jail for anyone convicted of an assault against a police officer in Queensland. The coalition government in Western Australia has introduced mandatory sentences for people who assault police officers. That has sent a clear message to would-be offenders. Once again the LNP has introduced a private member's bill into the parliament to provide for mandatory sentences against police. The LNP is really giving the state Labor government a second chance to support police officers and to put petty political differences aside and send a message to the community that this behaviour is unacceptable. The police officers in our community deserve our support.